



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

RECENT TENDENCIES IN THE TEACHING OF PUBLIC SPEAKING IN COLLEGE¹

J. P. RYAN
Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa

Sidney Smith, the English humorist, was one day walking along the street when he saw in a backyard beside the line fence two women arguing violently. He stopped and remarked to his companion, "Now these women will never agree, because they are arguing from different premises." Most of our discussions go on from different premises. Half the discussions grow into disagreement because people use the same word in different senses; the other half come from using different words in the same sense. All the trouble which cannot be classified into these two categories comes from using words with no sense. In any event, discussions are generally matters of misunderstandings. If we only understood, we would surely be juster, perhaps wiser. Anyway, the wise man prays for the gift to see the proposition as the other fellow sees it. That we may get this gift, perhaps prevent misunderstanding, let us first come to some agreement on the meaning of our terms.

Recent is the last half-decade; that is, during the last five years. Tendency is a state of movement toward some end or purpose. A tendency may be an organized movement or a general drift. In this paper tendency covers both the clearly marked reorganizations of the outer form and the less discernible changes in the inner spirit. Finally, to be classed as a tendency, the phenomenon must be more or less widespread. Any local movement, individual method, or sporadic activity, however interesting, can hardly be called a tendency. If you are getting wonderful results with some new method or are interested in some special movement, do not feel grieved if that movement or method is not

¹ This paper was read at the meeting of the Iowa State Teachers' Association, on November 2.

noted here. Only those principles and practices which have been tested by a large number of teachers and are becoming more generally accepted as part and parcel of the regular educational procedure will be noted as tendencies. Fortunately the word *teaching* limits our point of view. We are not here concerned with the social, theoretic, practical, or commercial viewpoints. We are interested now only in the recent pedagogical tendencies of our subject. Public speaking is not used here in that large, general sense as including interpretation, reading, and dramatic art. Though these studies are legitimate parts of a department of speech, yet we are not now concerned with the remarkable changes going on in these branches. For the limits of this paper public speaking means the art of beautiful and effective speech in conversation, as well as the theory and the practice of speechmaking. Public speaking deals with proper speech in private conversation or in public gatherings.

With a common understanding of the meaning of the terms we may now pass to the attempt to answer the question: What are the recent notable changes in our subject? The answer is found in three notable tendencies in the spirit and three in the form. These changes are: (1) a restating of the purpose, (2) a growing interest in research, (3) a study of speech defect and speech culture, (4) a reorganizing of departments, (5) a new alignment of courses, and (6) a modernization of methods.

The first and most important change in the informing spirit is revealed by studying the statements of the purpose in the different college catalogues. As one reads the catalogues he realizes that there is back of the work a new spirit. Note the phrases here collected and think of their meaning. The purpose is "to make a greater recognition of the spoken word in education, to give more emphasis to the peculiar academic discipline of the speech sciences, and to realize more fully the educational values in the study of the speech arts." What a world of meaning back of such a declaration as this: "In the past the emphasis has been overmuch upon the artistic, upon performance; today the stress should be shifted to the scientific, to scholarship." Not half so reactionary and far more effective is the statement: "As the goal of science is explanation,

one of the great purposes in studying speaking is to discover knowledge of speech, and as the goal of art is action, the other great purpose is studying the art of speaking well." The statements are in a way interesting as revealing the strident tones of the radical. Less interesting but more influential are those statements of purpose which echo the voice of a philosophy, or reflect a larger tendency in education. Such statements as "to find out knowledge of speech," to develop the ability to think in terms of social life and social culture, "to train men and women to play their part in a democracy," show the greater socialization of education, reveal the changing concepts of educational values, and tell of the readjustments of educational practice. Probably no other subject in the curriculum is reflecting new movements as readily as is public speaking. The recent demand to teach citizenship found expression first in public-speaking classes. One of the chief tendencies in education today is away from the theory of cultural development and toward a theory of education as a process of individual rectification and preparation for social work and worth. We are not discussing the results of this tendency nor arguing about its merits; we are merely asserting that there is a big tendency away from classical-culture standards and toward social-value standards; furthermore we are asserting that this tendency is being manifest in the recent tendencies in public speaking. No one can hunt in the statements of purposes for tendencies without finding a clearly marked movement to stress the educational values in public speaking, and a less clearly defined manifestation of the larger educational tendencies of the day.

The second significant tendency in the teaching of public speaking today is the changed attitude toward research. There is a rapidly growing consciousness of the need and the meed of research. Thorough research, with its concomitant scholarship, is the best highway to good standing and good fellowship in the academic world. As no art has made much progress until that art became substantially based on its own sciences, so the art of speaking will not be greatly advanced until the underlying sciences are more thoroughly worked. And great will be the meed of scholarship. To the teachers of public speaking will come a finer character and a better

academic reputation. Speech and the teachers of speech will come into their own when they have collected a large body of verified knowledge, when they have aged a good volume of professional traditions.

One of the problems in research is the investigation of speech defects, and this work may be classed as the third tendency or change in the inner spirit, though it ought not to be forgotten that the movement is as much the result of a demand from without as of a change within. The insistent calls of our handicapped students, the demands of students from other departments, the petitions of parents, and the requests of organizations have forced the teachers of public speaking into the investigation of speech defects. We have had school surveys for nearly everything under the sun; at last, under the pressure from the people, we are making school surveys of the student's speech, and we are working with our own as well as with our foreign student for the correction of speech defects.

Closely associated with the work in speech defects is the movement for speech culture. There is a growing demand that the colleges give more attention to the subject of beautiful and effective speech in private conversation. The reputation of American speech as a disagreeable noise ought not to continue. Already many of the teachers of public speaking have joined in the national movement for better speech. If you are not associated in the work, you should be. Write for information to Professor John M. Clapp, 20 Vesey Street, New York City.

So far we have been speaking of the changes in the inner spirit; we will now look at the chief tendencies in the outer form. The first tendency is the organization of the work in separate departments and the beginning of correlation. More than 90 per cent of the teachers of speaking believe that the best interests of the work are served by separate organization. Though it is growing more and more manifest that the department of English needs the department of speech more than the department of speech needs English, yet the welfare of the work in speech demands separation. Effective results, proper financial support, healthy growth, are not fully realized until the work is organized in a separate department.

Along with this very strong tendency for separate organization there is a much weaker movement for correlation with other departments. Those who are advocating correlation believe that separation without correlation will soon spell death. By close correlation with other departments the greatest good for the department of speech is realized, while the work of the whole college is made more effective. Correlation is working together for the same academic purpose. The department of speech is peculiarly fitted to bring all the other departments together. Though there is a very distinct field of knowledge for the department of speech, and many problems therein wait for solution, yet for the present the first business of such a department is to furnish ready service in the other fields of knowledge. Perhaps the biggest service that speaking can do in our colleges today is to bring the departments together and help somewhat in eliminating the evils of departmental education. The correlation is being worked out by making the credit in the courses in public speaking depend partly upon the work done in other courses. Committees on correlation, closer standardization, printed syllabi of the courses, all help in bringing the departments together.

Great as is the activity in the reorganization of the department, there is still greater activity in the rearrangement of courses. These courses in public speaking are generally organized on the basis of two hours a week throughout the year. There are some three-hour courses, but the tendency is, I think, toward two hours a week. The practices are so variable that there is no tendency which marks the work as required, elective, Freshman, Sophomore, or Junior. Though I found no college in which there is a prohibition against men and women registering for the same class, yet I did find the tendency toward segregation to be on the increase. Segregation seems to be creeping in more as a solution of some local problem, generally in registration, than as a settled pedagogical policy, adopted for its merits. Nevertheless, in the colleges into which segregation has crept there is a conviction among not a few that men and women are better cared for in segregated classes. The courses are gradually solidifying into three types: beginners, advanced, and formal. The first is known as the Essential of

Public Speaking, or Public Speaking I; the second, as Advanced Public Speaking, or Practical Public Speaking; and the third course is called Forms of Public Address, or Formal Public Speaking. There are many different courses, as After-Dinner Oratory, Argumentative Address, etc., but in the main the work seems to have settled into these three types, and the content of each course is pretty clearly indicated by the title.

In procedure the tendency is toward the practical laboratory method. In some schools each pupil is required to make fifteen short speeches during the term; in others the requirement is six three-minute speeches; still others call for eight three-minute speeches; and in a few schools each student is required to make a short speech every time the class meets. These speeches may be original compositions or memorized extracts. About the use of the memorized extract or declamation there are many unsettled questions, but I thought I found a tendency away from the use of the declamation and toward the original speech. Much as one must regret certain pernicious influences from the use of the declamation, yet one readily maintains the particular advantages in the use of the declamation for the teaching of technique.

The original speech, however, holds sway, and the tendency in every course is to stress the practical and neglect the theory. Answers to such questions on the theory, as, How much theory should be given? What is the best method of presentation? Should the theory be given before practice, or accompanying practice, or after considerable practice? have not settled down into any tendency sufficiently to come within the purview of this paper. There are a few ultra-radicals who are acclaiming no theory: "Give a pupil practice, practice, and he will get along without the theory, or get it." This procedure has not become general enough to justify its discussion. We have then to speak of the different methods in teaching the theory of speaking. There are three clearly distinguished tendencies: the reporting, the speechmaking, and the lecturing. In the reporting method a number of textbooks are put on the reference shelf. A definite topic is assigned from day to day, and on that assigned topic each pupil brings to class a written report. By the speechmaking method each student is

led to make a model speech upon some question of theory. Though the speaker imparts little information to the class, yet he must himself actually appropriate a great deal, on the principle that one learns a thing by trying to teach that thing to another. According to the lecture method the pupil reads the theory in his textbooks and recites upon the studied lesson at the next meeting of the class. The lecture method takes its name from the lecture period rather than from a formal speech. All three of the methods are used singly or in combination.

There are many recent movements which have not settled into a definite drift or fallen into a general tendency. Chief of these are: the movement for a unit in the college-entrance requirements, the use of the laboratory method, the amount of voice training, the use of the declamation, the value of speaking contests, the standardization of courses, the standardization of credit for courses, and the betterment of the teaching conditions. These problems appeal to us strongly, not only because they are yet unsolved, but because they are so important. Indeed some of them may prove to be of far more importance than some of the recent tendencies.

In any event no one can note some of the recent tendencies in the teaching of public speaking without finding proof that the work in this subject is being wonderfully improved, and that the educational values of the subject, so often abused or entirely neglected, are now being more rightly recognized and are being given a more potential place in the college curriculum. To sum up, then, the recent tendencies have been a change in the inner spirit and a remodeling of the outer form. The change in the spirit has been noted in the restatements of the purpose, in the beginning of research work, and in the movement for speech culture and study of speech defects. The remodeling of the outer form has been noted in the reorganization of the department, in the rearrangement of the courses, and in the more practical methods of procedure. The present is indeed bright, and the future is full of hope.